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THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Ἰὼν το Ὁμια ἀν ῥνα ἡάρουλι, ἀγυρ ῥιόδάνι ἀνι ἀν ὅταλιν ὁαῖτοιλ ὁο να ὁόμιλι.

LUKE II. 14.

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NUNNERIES.

THE great increase in the number of nunneries in these countries, during the last few years, has brought the questions connected with those institutions more prominently before the public. In these countries, where employment in general for the male part of the population is abundant, and where emigration generally allures the unemployed away from our shores, the increase of monasteries is not likely to occur. Not so with regard to nunneries; for, as to them, the very same causes lead to their increase, and of this the Roman Catholic Church has eagerly availed itself.

During the middle ages, when violence was rife, and protection for female virtue from lawless force was often to be found only within the walls of the convent, reasons did exist for these institutions which certainly have no place at the present day. And now, undoubtedly, the only reasonable inquiry can be, whether religion, rightly understood, does, in any case, require persons to separate from the natural ties of relationship, renounce intercourse with the world, and enter into vows; to adopt a course of life which can, if necessary or desirable, be followed without them.

Now, we do not purpose to enter into the theological question, but we are anxious to call the attention of Roman Catholics to the evils necessarily arising out of such institutions, and to their obvious tendency to accumulate wealth in the hands of those who have the control or management of them; for, if they have such tendency, it surely is not unreasonable to infer that the motives of those who maintain their existence are, at least, open to grave suspicion, and are well calculated to excite the attention of those members of their own persuasion, who are not satisfied to encourage the grasping disposition of an ambitious priesthood. To enable such persons, therefore, to form a correct opinion on this subject, we will lay before our readers the facts of some cases which have, of late years, come before the public notice.

The first case to which we would refer is that of Fulham v. McCarthy; for, as the facts proved in it were made the foundation of a decree of the Court of Chancery, and were, consequently, the subject of protracted discussions, their accuracy can hardly be doubted, particularly, as the parties against whom the allegations were made, declined to go before a jury, to contest their truth. It appeared that two daughters of a wealthy Roman Catholic gentleman, at Cork, had entered as nuns into the Ursuline Convent there. With each of them, on their entrance, the father had given a portion of £1,000, on the understanding (as his son expressly stated before the Mortmain Committee) that they were not to participate further in his property. Some years afterwards, he died intestate, and his property, which amounted to about £90,000, became divisible amongst all his children, and the distributive share of each of the sisters, who had become nuns, would have amounted to nearly £10,000. It appeared that each of these sisters declared to several members of their own family, that they considered themselves as having no claim to any share, and their wish was to remove the legal claim, by an assignment to their brothers and sisters; indeed, one of them, in a conversation with her brothers, stated she had applied to the

superioress for permission to do so. To this application the superioress said that she had no power, but told her to apply to the bishop. The bishop, however, declared he had no power, and, when urged to say who had the power, he replied, "Nobody," and referred her back to the superioress.

The bishop's own statement as given in the cause confirms the fact of this application, for he admits that he told her that he had no power to grant her permission, or to dispense with her vows of poverty, and that she could not, consistently with such vow, alienate from the convent the property, and that, according to the rules and regulations of the institution, any property devolving upon her or upon any other professed nun, became the property of the community. The poor nun then said that the superioress had already referred her to him; upon which the bishop said—"You must observe your vow of obedience." The sisters, it would appear, notwithstanding these plain intimations of the will of their superiors, still resisted; but, at length, were coerced into signing the necessary deeds, assigning their property to the convent; and it was upon foot of these assignments that legal proceedings were instituted.

Of the means by which these assignments were obtained we have no obscure intimation in the evidence given in the cause. Mrs. Murrough, another of the sisters, and whose evidence the Chancellor stated to have been wholly unimpeached, says—"My sister Maria stated that she had signed a certain deed, in conformity with her vows of obedience. The other sister said she hoped the convent would never get a farthing of the money; and, previous to her signing the deed, she declared in the presence of the witness and of her brothers—that if she was obliged to sign a deed it would be like the act of a *dead person*, and that she would have no more power over her will or act than a dead person would have; that it was out of her power to avoid signing the deed, in consequence of the strictness of her vow, the operation of which she compared to the effect of the presentation of a pistol by a highwayman about to rob another."

This evidence of the sister confirms the evidence of the brother, who, in his examination, stated, that the same sister declared—"That she feared she would be obliged to sign the deed in compliance with her vows, and would be obliged to state that her acts were *free and voluntary*." After the deed was signed, the same sister said—"That she knew she did an act contrary to her conscience, but let the sin be on those who caused her to do so." The same witness said—"That having called the attention of her sister Maria to the statements of an affidavit made by her, and which were at variance with her sentiments as expressed to herself, she replied—"I refused to make that affidavit in my own person as coming from Maria McCarthy, but I told the solicitor if he put the word "religious" into the affidavit I would then take it. He then asked her this question—If one of the young ladies of the convent was obnoxious to the superioress, and you were desired to give her arsenic, would you do so under your vow of obedience. She said she would not be asked to do so. To which the witness very naturally replied—"Maria, do not say so—as they have asked you to make an affidavit which you refused to make in your own name, and to assist in proceedings taken contrary to your wish and without your consent." The same witness also stated that the other sister told him, "that if all the sufferings during her whole life were contracted within the space of half an hour, it would not equal what she suffered since her father's death in reference to this matter; and that she had seen a book in the convent, in which it was stated that the punishment for serious crime was to be immured, and fed on bread and water, and that, in some cases, persons had died of it; and that it had been decided that any member of the convent speaking or acting against their claims to this property would be guilty of mortal sin."

Now, this evidence was believed, and was the foundation on which the decree of the court rested; and, we would ask our readers, to consider well the workings of the system thus disclosed. It is obvious that, for one case thus brought before the public notice, fifty would occur of which no intimation would escape beyond the walls of the convent. The influence that the priesthood exercise over the members of their own flocks—the unwillingness to bring discredit on their spiritual superiors—the effect which the teaching of implicit obedience must produce in

the minds of the unhappy inmates, and the dread of incurring those penalties which, it appears, are denounced, even against the apparent hesitation to comply with the commands of their superiors, all combine to make it difficult, if not impossible, to bring such cases before our legal tribunals, or submit them to the ordeal of public opinion. But the very possibility that such things can occur, is surely sufficient to justify the Protestant objections to such institutions. And when Roman Catholics remember the class of persons from whom votaries are always sought—that it is invariably the wealthy and well-endowed who are urged to enter these communities—that the vows of poverty thus taken by the wealthy have a direct and manifest tendency to augment the general wealth of the great spiritual corporation to which they are attached—these things, surely, should excite their suspicions, and lead them to investigate narrowly the reasons on which such institutions are maintained.

To us, we confess, they appear wholly inconsistent with the spirit and tenor of the Gospel, which, in all its teachings, deals with mankind as social beings, bound to perform social duties, and in its precepts enjoins what our conduct should be in the various relations of life. It is in the daily duties of life—in our intercourse with our fellow man, that the best exercise of Christian feeling and Christian principles is to be found. And to reject the means thus appointed by Providence for our probation and trial appears to us to set at nought the ordinance of God, and to dethrone the God of nature from his throne, because, in his mercy he has also revealed himself as a God of grace.

IS THE PROTESTANT BIBLE A CORRUPT AND MUTILATED TRANSLATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES?

WE suspend our papers on the Douay Bible, for this month, for the purpose of giving insertion to the following valuable letter, which comes in very well into our series, as it applies to the notes of the present Douay Bible, the same examination which in our last number we applied to the text, and which thereby very much strengthens our argument.

Those who compare this letter with their Douay Bibles will probably observe that, in two or three places (such as Phil. ii. 7, and Hebrews i. 3), the Douay Bible, published at Derby, which the writer of this letter used, differs from the Douay Bibles now in use in Ireland. The notes which the writer gives from the Bible printed at Derby, are the same as those in the Irish Bibles. With very few exceptions these notes have been introduced into the Douay Bible in modern times. Very few of them were in the old Douay Bibles. We have not been able to trace back the new notes, farther than the Testament printed with Dr. Troy's sanction in 1803.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—I trust that your Roman Catholic readers will duly appreciate your remarks under this title, and will profit by the service rendered to them by our translators of the sacred Scriptures.

You have satisfactorily shown that, if our version be the "Devil's Book," Romanists are much indebted to that book for the translation which they now possess.

In your examination you have shown the emendations made in successive Romish editions, up to the one now in circulation. If I am not anticipating the course of your arguments, I would beg to offer a few remarks on this last edition.

I have before me the edition published by Messrs. Richardson of Derby, with annotations by Dr. Challoner, which bears on the title page Dr. Wiseman's approval, dated from Birmingham, January, 1847, and "published with approbation."

The persons in authority, feeling how imperfect is the present Roman Catholic edition, and admiring the fullness and completeness of our authorised translation, in addition to the several emendations and corrections in the text embodied in the present Romish edition, as shown by your articles, have, in the notes, suggested still farther emendations and corrections. They have placed their corrections in foot-notes, and, doubtless, in a very short time, we shall